

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE FAIR SCHOOL FUNDING PROVISIONS CONTAINED IN HB 110

TO
THE SENATE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

BY
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Chairman Brenner, Vice-Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee, I am writing to express support for the Fair School Funding Plan provisions in HB 110, as approved by the House of Representatives, on behalf of the North Olmsted City School District.

The City of North Olmsted is a western suburb of Cuyahoga County. It is a community dedicated to quality education for its children. However, it is also a community increasingly challenged to afford such an education under the current model for funding traditional public schools.

While basic state aid received by the district over the last several years has not kept pace with inflation, other revenue sources have been eliminated, reduced, or redirected to alternative education providers.

North Olmsted has lost over \$23 Million in revenue since the phase-out of the Tangible Personal Property tax began in 2006. In the last four years, we have transferred more than \$2.2 Million (\$800,000 in the past year alone) from the general funds to community and private schools. State funding to help offset transportation costs, including costs to transport students to schools outside of the city, and the replacement of buses has been slashed. Furthermore, the district lost over \$1 Million over the past four years due to cuts in the state's reimbursement program for Catastrophic Special Needs costs.

Relying on local taxpayers to replace this revenue, as well as to pay for post-biennium budget mandates that include little or no funding to implement, is our only recourse. This over-reliance on property owners has become increasingly difficult for a community where forty percent of our student body qualifies for free-and-reduced meals and nearly four in ten students come from homes considered economically disadvantaged.

The Fair School Funding Plan provisions in HB 110 move toward a remedy. It takes into account a community's ability to pay, in addition to property taxes, when determining the state and local share.

The provisions provide categorical aid that will help districts meet the needs of students who are more costly to educate. This is critical in North Olmsted where nearly 600 students are on IEP's, where at least 21 different languages are spoken, and where total special education costs typically exceed \$10 Million annually.

The Fair School Funding Plan also means North Olmsted would keep funds generated by the local community, and overseen by officials elected by that community, in North Olmsted City School classrooms.

Therefore, the North Olmsted Board of Education urges the Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee to keep the Fair School Funding Plan provisions in HB 110 as passed by the House of Representatives.

We urge this committee to adopt a more constitutionally sound education-funding model.

Lastly, we encourage you to prioritize public K-12 education in this year's biennium budget. For as Aristotle once postulated, recognized by a plaque hanging on a wall in Ohio's Statehouse, "All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth."

Thank you for your consideration.